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177 Furthermore, doing away with marriage by payment destroys with it the family backing which, in the economic sense, means as much to the woman, the man, and the children as to the maternal relatives through the system of payments, repayments, and compensations that are consequent on it. Above all, the woman loses the social and economic backing of her group, and the man the guarantee of her fidelity.

The woman who has migrated and has taken to this way of life while outside her native land, or who has accepted it in her own homeland, usually will not return to the country, or if she does it is only to live there while she spends the money she has earned, to return later and resume her trade. Today prostitution is a menace to all La Guajira. Young Indians who have not been able to obtain a wife or simply anyone who wants sexual satisfaction will find it with a Guajiro woman by means of a casual payment, and with prostitution has come a new scourge for the Guajiro: [164] venereal diseases, brought and spread by those who have acquired it in their relations with the civilizados. Ignorance on the part of the prostitute of hygienic precepts which would free her from these ills has resulted in the disease increasing dangerously.

• [757] Moreover, there exists in the peninsula no clinic where the native can go for treatment, and there is only one doctor and a poorly equipped hospital in Uribla. Hence, prostitution has aided, and still aids, not only social bankruptcy by the wreck of the institution of the family but also physical degeneration by the unrestricted spreading of venereal diseases among the youth of the country.

583 Outfit and dowry of the woman. When a Guajiro woman is bought the family gives her the inheritance, in livestock, which is hers by right. These gifts go to her in accordance with her social standing and with the amount of the marriage payment, because this establishes the prestige of the maternal relatives. They know that a man who has paid dearly for his wife expects that she has not cost so much just for the sake of the marital satisfactions she may give him, or for her known high social status, but that in her price there will be included an inheritance handed over to the bride for life and at this time. He could not

[52 cont.]

753 lacking this support, certain practices of a magic character
755 which place him — always respecting due proportions — on a
*756 plane of equality with the spirit or at least give him the possi-
bility of warding off its harmful effects from him or his fellows.
In the methods of healing, as will be seen as we progress in
this chapter, the individual makes use, either directly or in-
directly through an intermediary — the medicine man in this
case, of the benevolent powers of the instrument causing the
sickness, or else those of another spirit — under whatsoever
materialization — as strong or stronger than the original cause
of the sickness, in order to banish the illness.

755 The value of the Guajiro shaman, or medicine man, as
*756 a curer, as we were able to observe in Chapter II, lies in the
superiority conceded to him through his constant communication
with the world of the spirits, which places him, so to speak, on
a plane of equality with them. Nevertheless, in the aspect of
Guajiro medicine four different factors intervene, which we can
define in general as follows:

1) Medicine practiced directly by the shaman through his
communication with benevolent spirits.

2) Medicine by divination, dependent or independent of
the shaman, which creates another social group, not so clearly
defined: that of the diviner.

● 757 3) Medicine which might be called household, independent
of the shaman and of the diviner, which is applied through
pragmatic knowledge of the curative value of certain plants,
or through the observation of particular customs related to taboo,
which as we shall see later, are of a preventative type.

174 4) Medicine practiced by foreigners. This last factor must
648 have its origins in ethnographic history, and it appears to us
*756 quite difficult to clarify. It deals with the medical intervention
of curers from the [53] Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, whom the
Guajiro consult in certain cases. These inhabitants of the Sierra
belong to native groups included by Professor Rivet in the large
Chibcha linguistic family (38). Our supposition of contacts between

[58 cont.]

755 expert in these sicknesses and who devote themselves to applying the remedies and divining the causes of such illnesses indicate by what bird the fruit which the mother ate was contaminated. Once the origin of the sickness has been determined, they proceed to carry out the method of cure which entails hunting and capturing the bird responsible, which, once killed, is roasted, and the meat fed to the child. A sancocho [stew] is also prepared, using portions of the bird, a good part of which is fed to the child. With this medicine the infant should be quickly cured. If this does not effect a cure, the divination has been incorrectly made, and it was not that kind of bird that pecked at the fruit eaten by the mother during her pregnancy. The whole process must therefore be done over again to discover with absolute certainty what animal caused the child's sickness.

843 If a pregnant woman should eat the meat of a hen that has
753 been killed by a sparrow hawk, the child will be born sickly, his excretions will be green, and his crying will be like the cry of a hawk. When they do not know the origin of the sickness, they
755 apply home remedies or those of a local curer [curandero]. If
757 these do not bring about the desired effect, then they must turn to divination. The diviner will decide that the mother ate the flesh of a chicken that had been killed by a sparrow hawk. The curing method will follow a similar process to that previously noted: a hawk is found and killed; a leg of the creature is taken, and the bone is well cleaned and allowed to dry. When it is sufficiently dry it is boiled, and the child's body bathed with the resulting infusion.

262 The meat of such a hen — contaminated by the hawk
825 which had eaten some of it — is also harmful to children in
842 general, boys and girls, and also adults. Every time it is eaten
888 it causes sterility. For this reason the magic taboo on this meat is lifted only for the old and the very aged who have already lost their procreative powers and in consequence have nothing to fear in this respect.

766 Household medicine. This system of medicine, which, as we have said, is independent of shamans and diviners, is based above all on the practice of certain magic practices directly

[67 cont.]

826 he will die consumed by flames. Likewise, if a lock of human
754 hair is buried with a small quantity of dog excrement, the person who carries out this act of witchcraft can cause any harm he wishes to the owner of the hair.

648 Medicine practiced by foreigners. To ensure that his child
757 will be sound and fit and show greater resistance to sickness, the Guajiro father makes use of the medicine of the Arhuaco, who like the other natives we know connect this art directly with magic. It is well to take note, before pursuing this description, that the Arhuaco are held to be excellent doctors by all their neighbors, not only by the Indians but also by mestizos and mulattos, and even by Whites. The fame of these curers is such that sick people from the neighboring cities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and even from Maracaibo have themselves carried to them to be cured of their illnesses, or, as a last resort, send them some of their personal articles of underclothing by which the Arhuaco curer determines the sickness from which the individual is suffering and sends the necessary medicines.

The Guajiro have not escaped this influence. Their geographical nearness facilitates communication with the Arhuaco, but we do not know whether this interchange of relations was already established before the Conquest or if it is due to the external influence of the colonists who have settled on the slopes of the Sierra or in regions close to them, who in their turn have transmitted the legend of the fame of the Arhuaco as doctors to the Indians of La Guajira.

757 The fact is that generally, shortly before the birth of a
751 child or when some opportunity presents itself, the father goes
278 to the Arhuaco, and from one of them who knows the preventiva-
843 tive or curative value of plants he obtains several of these in order to doctor his child or prevent its sicknesses. Among these herbs are the vira-vira, quina dulce ["sweet quina"], the frallejón, and a number of others. These herbs are shredded and put into a bottle containing rum and to this mixture is added two kinds of drops, also of plant juices, which have been carefully [68] "whispered" or "muttered" over by the Arhuaco doctor. These drops, in addition to the plants to which we have previously

[68 cont.]

- 757 referred, are what contain the curative properties because of their
751 magic force. These medicines are applied in the following
778 manner: The infusion of herbs with rum and the drops "whis-
843 pered over" are added to previously boiled water, and the child
is bathed at birth with this mixture. When the mother feels the
pains of approaching childbirth, she also takes a glass of this
mixture and repeats this a few moments after the child is born,
which helps her to get rid of the placenta.

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- 75 Thus far the notes that we have concerning the magico-
preventative or curative medical methods of the Indians of La
Guaajira [sic]. These show first, how medicine, like birth,
sickness, and death, is subject to a series of cultural patterns,
the result of the individual's relations, magic or spiritualistic
(so far as the spirit of the dead is concerned), with his environ-
774 ment. The latter are to be understood in their widest meaning,
since as Doctor W. Born says:

"Primitive man's intellectual world is not really limited to sorcery since there are too many enigmas facing young humanity such as birth and death, dreams and sickness. To explain these, primitive man appeals to various supernatural forces. From experiences in the world of dreams, he derived the belief in a soul as a clear explanation of the consciousness of "ego," which is opposed to the destiny of death. The power of the soul to free itself from its body (as dreams seemed to indicate) accepted, it was natural that he should accept the possibility of the existence of independent and active souls in nature. This state renders feasible not only a polydemonism but also the notion of a material soul. Polydemonism admits that a demon; a sort of soul, lives in everything in nature, while the substance of the soul is an invisible energy which emanates from objects. As the substance

[69 cont.]

680 of self-defense. If we take into account the high infant mor-
165 tality among the Guajiro population, which reaches a very high
751 rate (32.97%) according to the data collected by the investigators
775 Virginia de Pineda Giraldo and María Rosa de Recasens, whose
findings were published in the Boletín de Anqueología (47), we

47. Pineda Giraldo Roberto. "Informe preliminar sobre aspectos sociales y económicos de la Guajira [Preliminary Report on Social and Economic Aspects of La Guajira]. "

can even better explain the series of prohibitions, of patterns established to protect the future mothers and unborn children from the malevolent influence of the spirits, whether of humans, animals, etc.

751 On the other hand, we can deduce from this study the fol-
755 lowing points: 1) Medicine practiced by shamans, intermediaries between the two worlds, is carried out almost exclusively on adults, for whom they prescribe the curative methods they deem essential in accord with the patient's illness. 2) On the other hand, curing by [70] divination, which we have called household curing, using a common term, has its field of action among newborn babies and mothers-to-be. 3) In this last type we encounter an extremely interesting fact, the ambivalence of certain animals, represented by their double capacity to cause illness and at the same time to cure it. 4) In the application of household preventative medicine, magic called sympathetic is frequently practiced. 5) In one of the accounts we find the occurrence of the magic action of a plant. This deals with the plant used to make the mammary glands secrete their milk after a mother had lost it and the child still requires to be breast fed. As the plant is able to produce milk, the mother by contact with it will inevitably be able to do the same, according to native belief. This aspect has been fully treated by Castiglione in one of the chapters of his work Encantamiento y Magia [Enchantment and Magic].
853 We wish to quote only a few paragraphs which will better clarify
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278 the magico-curative value of the plant under discussion: "Some-
757 times," says Castiglione, "as has been said, this popularity"
● (that of medicinal plants) "is derived from real therapeutic quali-
ties as, for example, the use of quina roots, which is prescribed
by scientific medicine; its power to cure intermittent fevers was
well known among the peoples of pre-Columbian America. In
278 many other cases the virtues of these plants depend on their ap-
755 pearance, on the similarity of their roots, their flowers, or their
fruit to certain characteristics of sicknesses or to some organ of
the body." (48) Somewhat earlier, in referring to this second

48. Castiglioni, Op. cit., VI, 82.

category of plants, he tells us: "The second category embraces
innumerable substances which by themselves, speaking objectively,
cannot in any way have any effect, either favorable or unfavora-
ble, but whose value stems exclusively and directly from the
ideas they provoke in the minds of the people concerned." (49).

49. Castiglioni, Op. cit., VI, 81.

The influence of magic in medicine is borne out, finally,
by the custom of visiting the Arhuaco doctors, in whom they see
powerful magicians who possess the secret of praying to a powerful
spirit to impregnate their remedies with its essence. It is this
aspect which attracts the Guajiro, not the plants in themselves
but the spirit, the demon if we may call it so, that is present
in the drops which have been prayed over by the Arhuaco curer.

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V

Magic and Funerals

811 With the Guajiro Indians, as with the majority of primitive
peoples, the complex ceremonial relating to death accounts for a
great part of their activities, their manner of acting, thinking, and

791 him and found that he could not make rain at all, but was
789 an impostor, so he was driven away with blows and was glad
to escape with his life.

756 Even in the days when the reputation of the piache stood
high, the Guajiro would not infrequently seek the help of
the famous medicine men of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta,
the so-called *mamds*, in whom many Creoles believed. A
Guajiro who could manage to do so would take a sick
person there or an article of clothing or some ornament that
the invalid had worn. The medicine men of the mountain
Indians would use this to diagnose the disease, and the
messenger would return with a herbal medicine. The
health-bringing plants were broken up and preserved in
spirits. People liked to acquire such medicine especially
before a child was born; it was then poured into the
infant's bath water and the mother drank a gulp of it.
The effect of it depended on the magical power of the
plants.

• 757 The Guajiro themselves used certain plants as medicine.
824 Sometimes these really were effective, but often it was just a
question of sorcery. A plant with much milky sap, for
example, was laid on a mother's breast if her milk failed.
The powers possessed by the mountain Indians of Sierra
Nevada were attributed to the circumstance that they
possessed the secret of invoking specially powerful spirits,
whose essence also permeated the herbal medicines people
got from them. The effect of the herbs thus came from the
spirits residing in them. Intoxicating drinks acted through
the spirits liberated in the process of fermentation; that was
a common belief among the Indians.

787 The Guajiro believed in omens and portents. Various
825 animals foretold misfortune or death. A wild cat wailing
round the house at night, a bat that persisted in following
one through the darkness, in certain circumstances also a
snake beside the house, all portended trouble or sorrow.
The Indians paid special attention to the behaviour of a
number of birds and interpreted this as indicating the
approach of visitors, the imminence of something un-
pleasant, etc. When they thought they had observed such a